

Thoughts from Pastor Ben

During my week off, I did some studying and also some relaxing with my family. We took off for the weekend and headed to Elkhart, IN. The reason for our visit was to see one of our old youth group members from our time in Alaska. She is now studying at a college down there. After a wonderful day spent with her, we headed back Sunday afternoon for home, but we first took a Sunday stroll through the back roads of the area. What we were exploring was Amish country. Elkhart is on the western edge of the Amish area there, which also includes the cities of Goshen and Shipshewana.

As we drove we saw horses and buggies everywhere. Many were gathered at various homesteads as they were probably worshipping together or eating Sunday dinner together. We saw young people walking on the side of the road with their signature clothes and headwear. It was fascinating to see, especially for the kids who had never entered this world before. In some ways, the Amish are something of a novelty to the rest of the world. They're fascinating for the rest of the world to marvel at.

One key tenet of the Amish community is to remain separate from the world. They have certainly accomplished that to a strong degree. While we drove around and took in the reality that was the Amish world, it also made me incredibly frustrated. While the Amish do believe in Jesus as their Savior, the common patterns and rules of their community often gain the most attention. It is a faith that is highly focused on following the right customs, rules, and legalisms. As I reflected in my mind, how sad I felt knowing that these believers missed half of what Jesus spoke about.

As Jesus prays to his Father in John 17, he says in v. 15, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." He goes on in v. 18, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." It is unimaginable to think what a failure the church would have been if the early church had holed itself up as the Amish community does today.

Then I got thinking about our own CRC church communities. The Amish stick to their rules and customs because it gives them stability. The community is sustained. In themselves, rules and customs are not necessarily bad things. Stability is a good thing. The problem comes when the rules and customs become legalisms and inhibit the spread of the gospel. When they become of more concern than Jesus himself, we have strayed from the true path. The tragedy of this is the loss of the gospel itself. As Paul dealt with this in the church at Galatia, he lamented that they had lost faith in the gospel, but were now relying upon their works. The Galatians were only the first in a long line of churches to fall to this temptation. Too many churches become communities of law rather than communities firmly founded upon faith in God's grace through Jesus Christ.

We must long to be a community of grace, where sinners find healing – for isn't that what we *all* need? We must constantly remind ourselves that our stability does not come from any custom or set of expectations, but upon Jesus Christ himself. Thank you for demonstrating this already and may we continue to encourage one another in this. God has much work for us to do.

Pastor Ben

“Expecting a Baby” A conversation with Kelly

There is a lot of excitement that surrounds a family that is expecting a new baby. In the case of a pending adoption, the excitement is no less real. “What will the baby look like?” “When will the baby arrive?” “What will she be like?” While the answers to these questions remain unknown for now, we do know that the little baby girl will be “fearfully and wonderfully made”!

Recently we sat down with Kelly Hulst in a relaxed atmosphere (without the busyness of children, since Dad stayed home with the kids) to find out how the adoption process was coming along for their family.

But first we learned a little bit more about Kelly. She grew up in a small town outside Saginaw MI. called Hemlock. She attended the small C.R.C church there, and even though her roots are not Dutch (a mixture of ancestry that can be traced on her fathers side to the 1600’s), she still considered Hope College and Calvin College as possible Colleges. After her visit to Calvin, she knew right away that is where she wanted to attend. It’s good thing, since she met Ben there in the dorms. She tried setting him up with her friends since her first impression was that he was “nice” but “too tall and too blond” for her! Initially Kelly’s plans for school included becoming a medical missionary. A 3 week Interim in Ecuador helped focus her goals. (Some of that time was spent with the Huadoni people where the martyrdom written about in the “The Gates of Splendor” occurred.) She switched to an Education major. The dream of being a missionary is still there but it may take a different form.

After Ben and Kelly were married (I guess she got over the “too tall and too blond” thing) she went on to teach science. Together they moved to Anchorage, Alaska for a year while Ben did his Internship at the CRC church there. During the winter, the nights were long, starting at 3:00 in the afternoon. Imagine your children attending school in the dark! But in the summer the days were a balmy 65 degrees and a luxurious length. Jacob was born in Alaska, which gave both sides of the family good reason to take extended vacation time there. Plus, their church family warmly enfolded this young couple and new baby and meaningful relationships were built.

It was 2 years after Ezra was born that Ben and Kelly started further exploration into adoption, a desire that Kelly had always had. As her world view increased, so too did her sympathy for children that were orphaned, a view that Ben shares with her. They realized that, if they were going to make this happen they should get the process started. Their application was placed with Adoption Associates in Ethiopia after realizing that many adoptions in Haiti were “stalling out” for various reasons. At the time, Adoption Associates was just 1 of 6 agency’s working in that country. But with the added attention Ethiopia received after celebrities adopted there, the number of Agency’s skyrocketed to 60! That is a lot more people vying for adoptions, and so, the wait has increased. They get updates from the agency as their name is moved further down the list (last check placed them at # 7).

They are praying for an adoption referral yet this summer, since the courts in Ethiopia close for 2 months starting in September. They will be sent a picture and details of the little girl and then given a short time to make a decision. The court in Ethiopia will then quickly finalize the adoption, and Kelly and Ben will head off to Africa to take their baby home.

How is the family preparing? They pray every day for the little girl. Jacob LOVES little babies and is eager to be a nurturing brother. Lily will tell you the name they are considering if you ask her, and Ezra may have to adjust to not being the “baby of the family” anymore.

Continue to pray for them as they move through this long adoption process. If you would like to help with a “dinner/ fund raiser” for their family to help with travel expenses please let Esther B. know.

SEE WHAT'S NEW IN THE LIBRARY!

What's So Amazing About Grace? *By Philip Yancey* - "There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make God love us less." A pretty amazing statement about God's grace, when you think about it. But do we understand it? More importantly, do we truly believe in it? And most importantly, do our lives as Christians truly proclaim it? Journey with Philip Yancey as he paints compelling, true portraits of people who can attest to the life-changing power of grace.

The Robe *by Lloyd C. Douglas* - The classic story of the Roman soldier who gambled for Christ's robe and won it. A timeless story of adventure, faith and romance, a tale of spiritual longing and ultimate redemption.

Though Waters Roar *by Lynn Austin* - Set in the early 1900's, this is the story of a courageous woman and her granddaughter who are jailed for their convictions during prohibition. The Austen magic is at work again!

Road to Nowhere *by Paul Robertson* - Most small towns would kill for a new highway. In the quiet burg of Wardsville, someone may have done just that. Shady deals and shocking corruption arrive with the announcement of what may be a . . . road to nowhere.

Delicacy *by C. L. Kelly* - the Dixons devote their time to Taste of Success, a training program teaching culinary arts to the homeless and helping them find a better life. But then . . . poison . . . kidnapping . . . fire . . . a series of disturbing events hit Taste of Success one after another - could they be related to the fact that the school sits on a very valuable piece of real estate someone is willing to kill for? (Book 3 in the *Sensations* series - look for Scent and Echo in our library)

And for the kids . . .

DVD "**The Sugar Creek Gang and The Great Canoe Fish**" Some say he's legend, some say he's real. Join the gang on a canoe trip to find out!





Taking Aim..... Vision Team Update from Judy Joling

By now, all of our 2009 calendars have probably been discarded – thrown in the trash. 2009 is over and we are settling in to 2010. Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Recently, a journalist for the *Kalamazoo Gazette* wrote a column about New Year's resolutions. She mused about the practice of making resolutions and decided the secret to keeping them is to aim low. At the beginning of 2009, her resolution was simply to take a multivitamin tablet each and every day. Apparently, she was able to stick to her resolution for the entire year.

As a member of this church's Vision Team, I hope we will reject that idea completely. Not about taking vitamins – that part is fine. But, I think we should reject the idea that we will feel more successful if we just aim low. In fact, perhaps this year we should aim really, really high – higher than we ever thought possible.

The Vision Team met on January 13th. We spent most of the evening going over the “results” of the congregational survey that had been distributed and returned to us last fall. Again, the Vision Team thanks everyone who participated. There were many insightful, respectful, helpful, thought provoking and encouraging comments. As a team, we are beginning to get a sense of what this church is doing well, but we are also taking note of our weaknesses. For example, survey results indicated a great deal of satisfaction about the steps that we have taken to be a warm and inviting place to worship. The new Welcome Center, beautiful message board with our Mission Statement, and the use of name tags are changes that seem to be appreciated by our members and are believed to convey to our visitors and guests that we are genuinely pleased to have them with us. Yet, the surveys revealed some measure of trepidation about evangelism – what it is and how we go about doing it. The Vision Team will continue to dig deeper; looking for areas that need improving and seeking venues to implement those improvements.

The Vision Team has met with most of the various ministry teams, and we have learned that several of the ministry teams are looking for additional members – or at least ideas and encouragement. There are many to choose from: Worship; First Impressions; Building; Education; Boosters; Evangelism; and Fellowship. Prayerfully consider how you might be able to contribute.

We don't know what 2010 holds for Comstock CRC. Perhaps this is the year that Comstock CRC will cement its position in this community, becoming a true gem. Perhaps 2010 will see us welcoming more new members than ever before. Perhaps we will touch lives in ways that we have never imagined. The Vision Team will be working to open the doors of opportunity, trusting God to lead the way.

Individually and collectively, we have a story to tell. Is there any reason we can't be bold and daring in our faith? Is there any reason not to aim high?

“ When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princesses are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, then the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit, to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all people, to make a little music with the heart . . .and to radiate the light of Christ every day, in every way, in all that we do and say.”

The Mood of Christmas by Howard Thurman



Did you know that you can get back all the interest you pay for college student loans?

Did you know that there is free help for senior citizens and low income families?

The Comstock Community Center offers free tax help for senior citizens and low income families. Call 345-8556 to make an appointment.

You can also talk to Reinard VanOosterum with questions you might have about this free service at the Community Center.

Booster Barbecue Supper

Thursday, February 11
5:00-6:30 PM

Come Hungry!!
Help support our Christian Education
Fund.



PAUL MAIER SEMINAR

Dr. Paul Maier, well-known author, Biblical historian, and WMU professor, will present a one-day seminar entitled "**St. Paul and the Spread of Christianity**" at Zion Lutheran Church in Kalamazoo on Saturday, March 13th. He uses both sacred and secular sources to illuminate the life and mission journeys of the apostle Paul, including Paul's voyage to Rome, his trial there, and his death.

The cost is \$15.00 for adults who pre-register (\$20.00 the week of the program), and \$10.00 for students college age and younger (\$15.00 the last week). Doors open at 9:00 a.m. with lunch provided at noon. The program will end by 3:00 p.m.

Tickets may be reserved by going online to www.zionkazoo.org or by picking up a registration form at Zion Church.

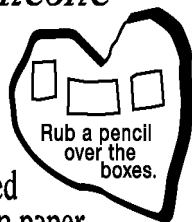
I have attended several lectures and seminars by Dr. Maier, and I can assure you that his humble yet authoritative demeanor, along with his knowledgeable yet down-to-earth style, will hold your interest to the very end!

Thea McNeilage

Make a Valentine for Someone Special

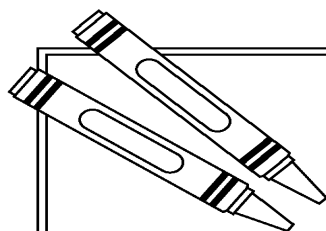
You will need:

- ♥ a sheet of red construction paper
- ♥ a sheet of white copier paper
- ♥ glue or a glue stick
- ♥ scissors
- ♥ pencil
- ♥ red marker
- ♥ fine-point black marker



How to make it:

1. Cut a large heart out of the red paper.
2. Using the leftover scraps, cut out letters (about 1 inch high) to spell "I LOVE YOU" or "GOD LOVES YOU." Glue the letters in the center of the heart.
3. Cut a heart out of the white paper. Make it about 1 inch smaller than the red one.
4. Glue the white heart on top of the red one so that a 1 inch red border shows and the letters are covered.
5. Feel where the red letters are under the white paper and draw a box around each word using the red marker. Below the last box write: Rub a pencil over the boxes to find a special message!
6. Sign your name.



Just for KIDS

A Message of Love

Luke 10:27 has a wonderful message to live by.

Find the message by writing the opposite words next to the ones given. Then transfer the letters to the numbered lines they match below.

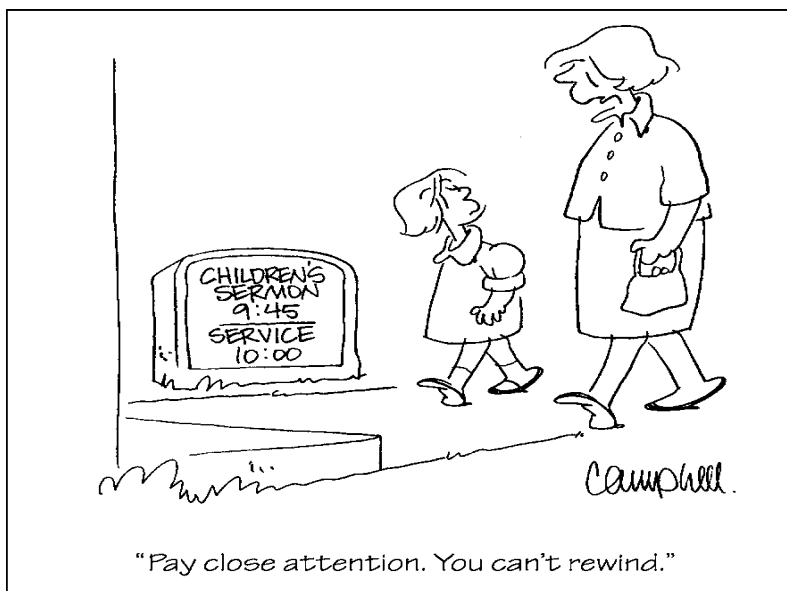
cool 1 2 3 4
under 5 6 7 8
out 9 10
large 11 12 13 14 15
quiet 16 17 18 19

soft 20 21 22 23
old 24 25 26 27 28
after 29 30 31 32 33 34
false 35 36 37 38

" 14 5 6 7 35 20 7 15 17 36 23 24 5 18 8 28 17 23
1 9 35 20 2 16 14 24 5 18 3 20 7 13 8 35 2 10 23
1 9 35 20 13 14 16 24 17 37 36 11 5 18 14 2 27 19
1 9 35 20 21 15 16 24 17 18 36 11 35 3 30 10 28 35 20
2 10 23 1 9 35 20 21 14 15 24 5 37 8 4 9 10 23 ;"
21 27 23 ' 16 32 6 7 24 5 18 22 10 34 9 28 20 29 17 33
13 11 24 25 26 22 11 7 14 31 ."



Answer: warm; over; in; small; loud; hard; young; before; true; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;" and, "love your neighbor as yourself."





Lincoln



Washington

February 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 7:00 Elders 7:00 Deacons	3 9:30 Ladies Bible Study 6:30 GEMS & Cadets	4 1:00 Power in Prayer 7:00 Ladies Bible Study	5	6
7	8	9	10 9:30 Layette Team 7:00 Vision Team	11 1:00 Power in Prayer	12	13 The Pulse meets for bowling fun night
14 AM - Communion 6:15 YPS - James has supper	15	16 7:00 Council	17 9:30 Ladies Bible Study 6:30 GEMS & Cadets	18 1:00 Power in Prayer 7:00 Ladies Bible Study	19	20
21 6:15 GWAN small group	22	23	24 8:30 Fellowship Breakfast at Theo & Stacy's restaurant	25 1:00 Power in Prayer	26	27
28 5:00 KCMS Ensemble 6:15 YPS - Seth has supper						



- 1 Don VanderLugt
- 2 Pastor Ben
- 7 Angie Hinds
- 8 Don Selles
Joanne Smit
- 16 Will Scholten
- 21 Howard Nash
Andrew Nowak
- 24 Rich Post
Ronda Slager
Ruth Slager
- 27 Harold Terpstra



2/10/96 Dwain & Becky
Cramer

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the members and
friends of Comstock
CRC.

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McNeilage

The March issue will
come out on February
28. All articles must
be submitted by
February 26.

FEBRUARY SCHEDULES

NURSERY

	<u>AM</u>	<u>PM</u>
2/7	Todd & Karen Triemstra Family	Ronda Slager
2/14	Don & Barb VanderLugt Family	Val Denton
2/21	Joel & Cindy Amos Family	Ruth Slager
2/28	Jim & Lisa Bosch Family	Julie Smit

OFFERINGS

2/7	Comstock Ministries/Christian Ed.	Int. Alliance of Hope
2/14	Comstock Ministries/Benevolent Fund	Christian Education
2/21	Comstock Ministries/Christian Ed.	Missions
2/28	Comstock Ministries/Christian Ed.	Cadets World Wide

ACCOMPANISTS

2/7	Kay Triemstra	Joy Koning
2/14	Linda French	Barb Hassing
2/21	Kay Triemstra	Linda French
2/28	Marty Schuiteboer	Barb Hassing

LIBRARIANS

2/7	Esther Post
2/14	Esther Post
2/21	Muriel Cramer
2/28	Muriel Cramer

WELCOME CENTER

2/7	Dave & Judy Joling
2/14	Harold & Mardell Terpstra
2/21	Rod & Henrietta Linders
2/28	Will & Lyn Sholten

GREETERS

AM - Kim Terpstra & MaryLee Gosnell
PM - Rich & Esther Post

COFFEE SERVERS

Dale & Deb Cramer

SONG SERVICE LEADERS

2/7	Dean Denton
2/14	Rod Linders
2/21	Rich Post
2/28	Molly Selles

TECH TEAM

2/7 & 2/28	Scott & Seth Brower
2/14	Jim & Tina Slager
2/21	Mark & Matt Terpstra

USHERS

AM - Allison Bosch & Katelynn DeBruyn
PM - Matt Terpstra
VALET PARKING - Ross DeBruyn